

At about 2.30 am, within seconds of extinguishing my last lamp, a male *H. celerio* audibly landed on the sheet and it was almost sacrilege to box such quivering splendour. With renewed enthusiasm we resumed full operations and within fifteen minutes Dick was rewarded with a gravid female *Heliothis armigera* Hb. from which we both reared a fine series.

In the past *H. celerio* had the occasional "good" year, but more recently, reported visits to Britain have been much declined; and I can find but eight records for the 1970s and only four others for the 1980s.—
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A melanic form of *Paradarsia extersaria* Hüb. (Lep.: Geometridae) in N.W. Kent.

Melanic forms of this moth would seem to have been distinctly rare in Britain, there being but two specimens, both ab. *variegata* Raebel, in the National Collection, one undated from S. Devon and the other from the New Forest, 13.vi.1899; a third specimen is noted by Chalmers-Hunt (*Butterflies and Moths of Kent* 3, 1981) from Bickley, June 1912. Ford (*Moths*, 1953) however, states that there are several melanic forms of *extersaria*, two of which, including *variegata*, occur in a few Kentish woods and that their genetics do not appear to be known. Melanic *extersaria* seems not to be mentioned elsewhere in the standard textbooks, including Barrett (*Lepidoptera of the British Islands*, 1901) and curiously Kettlewell (*The Evolution of Melanism*, 1973).

At the Annual Exhibition of the British Entomological and Natural History Society in 1987 D. O'Keefe exhibited a specimen of *variegata* from Petts Wood, Kent, 27.v.87, and the following year B. Skinner exhibited several obtained at mv light in the woodland near my residence, taken 8.vi.1988. That year two specimens were noted at my garden mv light, on June 12th and 26th. In 1989 I understand further specimens were encountered at mv light in these woodlands at Dartford by B. Skinner and R. Chatelain, while on 14th June I found a specimen settled upon the trunk of a sweet chestnut tree at the edge of the woodland; another visited my garden mv light on 9th June.

These, and other woodlands, in N.W. Kent have been well worked entomologically for over a hundred years, so this sudden appearance of melanic *extersaria* in some numbers, especially during a period when atmospheric pollution has dramatically decreased, is surely remarkable, although it may be accompanying a local population increase in the species over the past few years. My garden mv light has been in operation since 1969, but *extersaria* was not observed at it until 1976 (1), and after that not until 1984 (1), and then annually from 1986 (3), 1987 (1), 1988 (11) to 1989 (10). A further intriguing question is which are the Kentish woodlands referred to by E.B. Ford, are there specimens from them in existence, and if so, where are they located?—
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